



COMBATING TERRORISM AND ENHANCING REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY THROUGH DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: 2004 Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop

By RADM Robert T. Moeller, USN, Director, J5 Plans & Policy, USCENTCOM

RADM John F. Sigler, USN Retired, NESA

Professor B.F. Griffard, Center for Strategic Leadership, USAWC

Uninterrupted access to and use of critical infrastructure in the Arabian Gulf region are key to the successful prosecution of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). To maintain access and use the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and its Gulf Region partners must deny outside organizations the ability to influence these requirements through terrorism. Essential to this will be information sharing and shared capabilities. Regional cooperation is important because terrorist threats vary, both regionally and nationally. To facilitate this endstate, theater security cooperation initiatives that promote regional collaboration are underway to improve national disaster preparedness capabilities and effective disaster preparedness training with partner nations.

Promoting Regional Stability and Security Objectives

As a result of ongoing world events, interest in regional disaster preparedness processes such as consequence management, crisis response, and medical countermeasures has increased. While the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threat is serious, it is not the sole threat facing forces and populations in the Arabian Gulf region. Petro-chemical plants near urban areas process and store tons of toxic chemicals, many of which are unstable and highly dangerous. An incident causing mass casualties could occur at any time, whether from terrorist action or industrial accident. Because these threats do not recognize State borders, a regional approach is necessary.

Under the aegis of the Defense Environmental Intelligence Cooperation Program, the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment (DUSD-I&E) teamed with the USCENTCOM to address these issues. The vehicle was the Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop, conducted September 26-29, 2004 in Manama, Bahrain. This multilateral event focused on the process of developing standardized procedures for regional response to intentional or accidental man-made incidents.

Hosted by the Bahrain Defence Forces, participants included Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, the United States, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) secretariat general, and observers from Egypt and Jordan. The U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership (USAWC/CSL) and the National Defense University (NDU) Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) provided operational, logistical, cultural, and administrative support for the workshop.

Conducted in two parts, the September 26, 2004 Medical Surveillance Workshop looked at enhancing disaster preparedness response and enabling Civil Defense within the Gulf Region. It focused on building a regional baseline of disaster preparedness and medical surveillance capabilities. In line with the intent stated above, the Disaster Response Preparedness



Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE NOV 2004		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Center for Strategic Leadership Issue Paper: Combating Terrorism and Enhancing Regional Stability and Security Through Disaster Preparedness: 2004 Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE Center for Strategic Leadership 650 Wright Avenue Carlisle, PA 17103-5049			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The original document contains color images.					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 4	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Conference, conducted September 27-29, 2004, employed individual work groups to explore executive level policy; regional resources; regional disaster response preparedness capacity building; and regional medical security preparedness and response to disasters.

The Journey

The GCC nations, Egypt, and Jordan share an interest with the United States in developing the required support, teamwork, and knowledge bases necessary to prevent or mitigate a major national or regional disaster. This year's Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop built upon the work of the two previous regional cooperation efforts conducted in 2000 and 2002. Convened in Muscat, Oman in June 2000, the initial conference examined issues in our environment that can strongly affect national, regional, and global security. While informational in nature, this meeting pointed out clearly that a manmade or naturally occurring environmental disaster does not necessarily adhere to national borders. Even incidents that occur in only one country can exceed that nation's capacity to respond to the event and/or to the mitigation required in the aftermath. A need for cooperative mechanisms was clearly indicated.



2004 Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop Attendees

As a result, a second major conference was held in Doha, Qatar in September 2002. With direct support from the Chiefs of Staff of each of the Gulf nations and from the Commander, USCENTCOM, this conference established five functional working groups with assigned obtainable objectives. The groups were first: "Defining Environmental Security and Setting Regional Approach Objectives;" second: "Environmental Security Intelligence, Detection and Information Sharing;" third: "A Regional Center and Command and Control;" fourth: "Regional Training and Exercises;" and finally: "Medical Surveillance." This final working group was a late addition, but considered necessary because Medical Surveillance was correctly recognized as a major requirement in the prevention, response and mitigation of a majority of disasters. Significantly, the Doha conferees created an Executive Committee composed of flag officers from each nation entrusted to develop policy recommendations and to ensure continuity of each of the five working groups.

As the importance of the GCC states, Egypt, and Jordan to sustainment of the GWOT grew, the theater security cooperation effort in the region evolved. In Muscat and Doha environmental security was the discussion vehicle. During the 2004 Conference and Workshop in Manama, USCENTCOM presented a strategy proposal for implementing a disaster preparedness program that combines elements of the Cooperative Defense Initiative (CDI) and environmental security to support regional stability and security objectives.

USCENTCOM Regional Disaster Preparedness Strategy



RADM Robert T. Moeller, USN, Director, J5 Plans & Policy, USCENTCOM Reviews the Conference Objectives

Disaster preparedness is the conduct of civil-military activities to improve host nations' national and regional capabilities to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and/or mitigate the effects of man-made and natural disasters. The proposed USCENTCOM Regional Disaster Preparedness Strategy builds on the recognition by Host Nations' leadership of a need for a regional disaster response capability. Using the Global War on Terrorism, the Theater Security Cooperation guidance, the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility strategy, with the "war of ideas" as the foundation, the initial operational focus of the resulting Disaster Preparedness Program (DPP) is combating terrorism, anti-terrorism, and counterterrorism. This program focuses on harnessing all of the various national and regional resources collectively to prevent disasters from happening in the first place, but if prevention fails to respond rapidly and effectively. The establishment of such capability within the region will maximize the availability of high demand-low density skill sets and assets, boost interoperability

if disaster affects multiple countries, and improve response capability to potential threats.

Utilizing the enablers of humanitarian assistance and disaster response, humanitarian demining, NBC passive defense, emergency management, medical countermeasures, and consequence management to assist with implementation, the DPP aims to enhance regional stability and security. Accomplishment of this goal is dependent upon the development of effective disaster preparedness procedures and response mechanisms within the region.

Mitigating the Threat

There is no doubt that natural or man-made disasters will occur sometime in the future—the question is when and where. Through regional cooperation, training, and exercising national and regional response capabilities the GCC States, Egypt, and Jordan can build the required support, teamwork, and knowledge base needed to effectively respond and then mitigate the consequences of a major incident. Participants in the 2004 Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop made great strides towards achieving this objective.



Dr. Faras Husain AbuZeyad, Bahrain, Reports on Medical Workshop Findings

The Medical Workshop used the premise that local disasters may have potentially widespread effects, but that these effects are mitigated through pre-planning, regional capacity-building, and medical surveillance/early warning systems. Key Workshop recommendations included: establishing a regional coordination center for rapid sharing and archiving of medical intelligence, to include medical surveillance, diagnostics, training, standards, unified disaster planning and response, and media sources; establishing regional standardization and credentialing programs; and developing a bi-annual regional exercise roadmap.

All Disaster Response Preparedness Conference work groups bolstered the necessity for a regional coordination capability. Initially this was seen as a "virtual" information clearinghouse. With the onset of a disaster, the Regional Coordination Center would be established in the country where the incident has occurred. It would draw on the available database to determine capabilities and to identify requirements. This effort requires an established capacity building program that begins in the short-term with national exercises, progressing to bi-lateral and regional multi-lateral exercises in the long-term. In order to prevent redundancies the establishment of regional centers of excellence was encouraged. Not every country needs a particular training capability. Centers of excellence for a particular area of expertise would be established at one location to service the region.

The Interagency Challenge

At the conclusion of the discussions one point was clear to all attendees – military and civilian alike – disaster preparedness is an interagency challenge. While the military can bring significant resources to bear, they are unlikely to be the first respond-

ers, or be in charge of the response or mitigation efforts.

When disaster strikes, the regional militaries are major contributors of heavy equipment and organized, disciplined manpower, but in most cases they will play a supporting role. Primary incident command responsibility normally resides with other government ministries, with fire and police forces, or with dedicated disaster relief organizations. Ministries of Health and Environment are directly involved in disaster prevention, response and mitigation, and Foreign Ministries coordinate the international effort. Coordination procedures with non-governmental and private voluntary organizations must also be in place.

Implementation of the USCENTCOM Disaster Preparedness Program will ease the challenge of inter-agency and multinational military coordination, and provide a regional framework for the development of the necessary defense doctrine, procedures and capabilities to ensure the capability for effective full coordination with multiple agencies of multiple nations.

Conclusion

As the third biannual event in the Gulf Region to address civil-military activities to improve host nations' national and regional capabilities to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and/or mitigate the effects of man-made and natural disasters, the 2004 Gulf Region Disaster Response Preparedness Conference and Medical Workshop successfully built on the outcomes of both the initial 2000 conference in Muscat, Oman, and the 2002 Disaster Response conference in Doha, Qatar. The improved national coordination and information sharing capabilities identified by the participants demonstrate a commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and coordination capabilities. With the proposed USCENTCOM five-year program the GCC states, Egypt, and Jordan have a roadmap that increases security and stability through effective national and regional civil-military coordination and "full spectrum" disaster preparedness.

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U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Center for Strategic Leadership
650 Wright Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17103-5049